

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Environmental Assessment
for the Sarvis Creek Land Acquisition**

Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, Colorado

DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0049-EA



Courtesy of Western Rivers Conservancy/David Dietrich

September 2014



CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

PROJECT NAME: Sarvis Creek Land Acquisition

This Environmental Assessment (EA) will analyze the impacts of the federal government acquiring approximately 45 acres of private land along the Yampa River in Routt County. The EA will provide the decision-maker, the Little Snake Field Office Manager, with current information to aid in the decision-making process. It will also determine if there are significant impacts not already analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement ((EIS), October 2011) for the Little Snake's Resource Management Plan (RMP) and whether a supplement to that EIS is needed or if a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate.

Section 1 of this EA will provide a context for what will be analyzed in the EA, describes the action we are considering, defines the project area, describes what the proposed action would accomplish, and identifies the criteria that we will use for choosing the appropriate alternative for the action.

APPLICANT: Bureau of Land Management

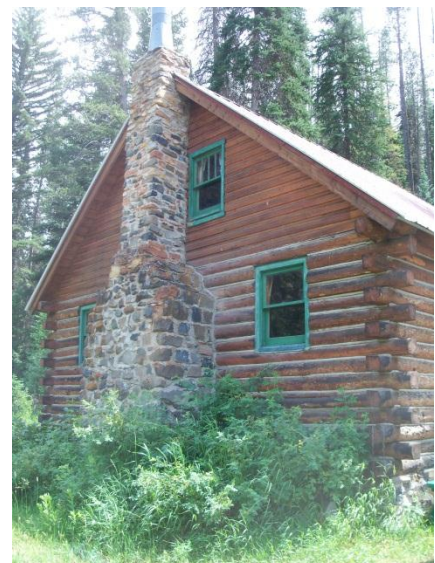
1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: 6th PM, T.4 N., R.84 W., sec. 21, SESE
sec. 22, SWSW
sec. 27, NWNW.

45.18 acres. See Map 1

COUNTY AND GENERAL LOCATION: Routt county; 10 miles south of Steamboat Springs, CO.

LANDSCAPE DESCRIPTION: The area consists of a canyon with a narrow, winding road (Routt County Road (RCR) 18), steep rock outcroppings on the west side of the road, and the Yampa River on the east side of the road. The canyon (when heading south) leads to a meadow area that is owned by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, known as the Sarvis Creek State Wildlife Area. This area serves as the parking and access to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area, which contains 44,556 acres and is under the jurisdiction of the Routt/Medicine bow National Forest. RCR 18 connects two potentially large residential and commercial developments; Lake Catamount to the north, and Stagecoach Subdivision to the south. The land ownership between these two areas is a mix of BLM, US Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife as well as private lands.



The parcel consists of approximately 5 acres on the west side of the Yampa River and 40 acres on the east side of the river. There is a cabin on the west side 5 acres, which would be included in the acquisition.

1.3 PURPOSE & NEED FOR THE ACTION: The advantages of acquiring this parcel and placing into public ownership would be to enhance public recreation opportunities within the Yampa River corridor; to maintain or improve important wildlife habitat; to consolidate public ownership; and to reduce the management complications common with scattered landownership patterns.

Decision to be Made: This EA analyzes two alternatives; the Proposed Action (acquisition); and No Action (no acquisition). This EA also discusses the environmental consequences of implementing either alternative.

1.4 PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW

LUP Name: Little Snake Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved: October, 2011

Final RMP/EIS, August, 2010

Draft RMP/EIS, January, 2007

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUPs because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

The Proposed Action implements Lands and Realty Goals and Objectives on page RMP-51 of the RMP to Consolidate BLM's landownership patterns in Routt County and in Moffat County. Objectives for achieving this goal include: Identify all the lands for exchange, sale or disposal within the LSFO by zone; through exchange or sale, look for opportunities for consolidation of BLM lands and/or for acquiring additional lands.

The Proposed Action has been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM MS 1601.03). The Proposed Action of the acquisition of 45.18 acres is in conformance with the Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan.

1.4.1 Consistency with Other Authorities

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as Amended (43 USC 1752), Section 205 – this section authorizes BLM to acquire land or interests in land for all purposes related to its mission as long as these acquisitions are consistent with “applicable land use plans.” The BLM has a variety of acquisition methods which may be utilized to acquire land or interest in land needed to facilitate and enhance its management objectives. These methods include negotiated purchase, donation, exchange, and condemnation.

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of January 2, 1971 as amended (P.L. 91-646), (42 U.S.C. Sec 4601, et seq.)

Annual Appropriations Acts

Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 as amended (P.L. 88-578), (16 U.S.C. Sec 460, et seq.)

Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of July 25, 2000 (P.L. 106-248).(114 Stat. 613)

April 16, 2010 Presidential Memorandum – America’s Great Outdoors

Sarvis Creek Area Plan (September, 1996)

1.5 SCOPING, PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AND ISSUES:

Scoping: Scoping was the primary mechanism used by the BLM to initially identify issues. Internal scoping was initiated when the project was presented to the LSFO Field Office interdisciplinary team on July 21, 2014. External scoping was conducted by posting notification of this project on the LSFO on-line National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) register on 07/15/14. A field visit to the project area was conducted on 07/28/14.

Issues: The interdisciplinary team identified the following resource issues: presence of noxious weeds and their control if BLM acquires the property; protection of cultural resources; protection of riparian vegetation; public safety and use of cabin; and increased recreational use of the parcel.

CHAPTER 2 –PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

2.1 BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

President Obama launched the America’s Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative on April 16, 2010, to foster a 21st-century approach to conservation that is designed by and accomplished in partnership with the American people. He charged the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality with leading this initiative.

The AGO report identified 10 major goals and 75 action items to advance this initiative, from expanding youth programs to increasing public awareness about conservation to better managing our public lands. Among these were three major place-based goals to focus the collective conservation and recreation efforts of the federal government; create and enhance urban parks and greenspaces, renew and restore rivers, and conserve large, rural landscapes.

At the local level, the AGO Initiative has identified the Yampa River Basin as an area that could benefit from conservation and restoration. The Yampa River is a 250 mile long river in

northwestern Colorado. It is a tributary of the Green River, and so contributes into the Colorado River. The Yampa has the second-largest watershed in the state of Colorado.

The Yampa River is formed from the confluence of the Bear River and Phillips Creek just east of the town of Yampa in northwestern Colorado in Routt County. From Yampa, the river flows north through Steamboat Springs, where it turns abruptly west. Near the small town of Milner the Elk River joins the Yampa which continues west in the plateau region along the north side of the Williams Fork Mountains, past the town of Craig. It is joined by the Little Snake River in Lilly Park. Finally, the Yampa meets the Green at Echo Park in Dinosaur National Monument, near the border with Utah ("Yampa River." Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. June 17, 2014. Retrieved July 16, 2014.

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Yampa_River&oldid=613236469)

The 45.18 acre Sarvis Creek property is both an inholding and an edgeholding in the Routt National Forest. The parcel is also adjacent to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area, BLM lands and the Sarvis Creek State Wildlife Area. The property was a summer ranch for the landowners whose main livestock operations were inundated by the construction of Stagecoach Dam in 1989. These lands feature moderate slopes running down to the Yampa River. Except for a meadow surrounding a cabin built in the 1960s, the property consists largely of lodgepole pine with some Engelmann spruce and willows lining the river bank.

The 44,556 acre Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area was created by Congress in 1993. It is the only wilderness area in Colorado that is not based on an alpine zone. It encompasses low to mid-elevation forested habitats. This densely-forested property provides habitat for black bears, mountain lions, elk and mule deer. The reach of the upper Yampa that flows through the property, which is located immediately below the confluence of Sarvis Creek and the Yampa, supports trophy rainbow and brown trout as well as mountain whitefish. The area is very popular for hiking, camping and hunting and is legendary among local fly anglers. Public ownership would improve access to this coveted tail-water fishery. Public acquisition would also fill a hole in a block of protected lands and buffer both the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area and State Wildlife Area along a beautiful reach of the upper Yampa.



Western Rivers Conservancy acquired the property in August 2013 and is now working to place these lands into permanent stewardship. The acquisition is supported by Trout Unlimited, Friends of the Yampa, Yampa Valley Land Trust and the Yampa River System Legacy Partnership. (Information contained in the above three paragraphs was obtained from the Western Rivers Conservancy website at

<http://www.westernrivers.org/projectatlas/sarvis-creek/>)

2.2 Proposed Action Alternative

The Federal Government, in partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) and the Yampa River Legacy Partnership, would acquire a 45.18 acre parcel, which includes approximately 1,535 feet of Yampa River frontage in Routt County, Colorado. The parcel adjoins the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area, managed by the United States Forest Service on the east; the Sarvis Creek State Wildlife Area, managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife on the south and BLM lands to the north. The land adjacent to the parcel on the west is still in private ownership, but there are on-going negotiations for this parcel to be placed in a conservation easement. See Map 1.

After the initial acquisition, the lands would be placed into management based on existing boundaries; the USFS would manage approximately 40 acres and the BLM would manage approximately 5 acres. See Map 2.

2.3 No Action Alternative

Under this alternative, the BLM would not acquire the parcel. It is possible that the parcel may eventually be developed for residential/seasonal occupancy and may be subdivided. In all likelihood, the property would not be managed in a manner that would enhance public recreational opportunities, maintain or improve important wildlife habitat or reduce the management complications common with scattered landownership patterns.

2.4 Alternatives Considered But Not Analyzed In Detail

No other alternatives were considered for this proposal.

CHAPTER 3 - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EFFECTS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Affected Resources:

The CEQ Regulations state that NEPA documents “must concentrate on the issues that are truly significant to the action in question, rather than amassing needless detail” (40 CFR 1500.1(b)). While many issues may arise during scoping, not all of the issues raised warrant analysis in an environmental assessment (EA). Issues will be analyzed if: 1) an analysis of the issue is necessary to make a reasoned choice between alternatives, or 2) if the issue is associated with a significant direct, indirect, or cumulative impact, or where analysis is necessary to determine the significance of the impacts. Table 1 lists the resources considered and the determination as to whether they require additional analysis.

Table 1. Resources and Determination of Need for Further Analysis

Determination 1	Resource	Resource Issue/Rationale for Determination
Physical Resources		
NI	Air Quality	Air quality in the area of analysis is good, as is typical of undeveloped areas of the western United States. The proposed action and alternative would not contribute to any change in air quality.
NI	Floodplains	There is no development planned in the floodplains under the Proposed Action or alternative.
NI	Hydrology, Ground	The proposed acquisition of the parcel would not affect ground water hydrology.
NI	Hydrology, Surface	The proposed acquisition of the parcel would not affect surface water hydrology
NP	Minerals, Fluid	There are no federal fluid minerals in the project area.
NP	Minerals, Solid	There are no federal solid minerals in the proposed parcel.
PI	Soils	See section 3.2 for analysis
NI	Water Quality, Ground	Management of ground water resources would be in conformance with the various regulations in the Clean Water Act, the Colorado Water Quality Control Act, FLMPMA, and the Colorado standards and guidelines to achieve the water quality classification and standards for surface and ground water developed by the Colorado Water Quality Control Commission. Future management actions for water quality would be in conformance with the LSFO RMP and would include strategies to achieve desired water quality conditions.
NI	Water Quality, Surface	The Upper Yampa River below Stagecoach Dam is currently meeting the State of Colorado aquatic life cold 1, recreation E, water supply and agriculture beneficial uses. The segment was listed on the State of Colorado Monitoring and Evaluation list (M&E) in 2010 for exceeding water supply levels for manganese during the sampling period of record (POR) from October 2003- May of 2004 by River Watch. The segment is also on the M&E for having exceeded the aquatic life standards for selenium in the same POR as stated above. Neither constituent has been monitored since that POR and therefore no change in the status has occurred. Surface waters would continue to meet the state's designated beneficial uses under the Proposed Action. There is no reason that the Proposed Action would negatively impact the currently listed constituents.
Biological Resources		
NI	Invasive, Non-native Species	The Little Snake Field Office utilizes the principles of Integrated Pest Management to control invasive species throughout the resource area. The acquisition of this parcel

		would have no impact to the overall statues of invasive species. The parcel would be incorporated into current weed management activities to control existing and future infestations.
NI	Migratory Birds	The proposed land acquisition would allow the BLM to manage habitat for migratory birds as it occurs on the acquired parcel.
NI	Special Status Animal Species	This acquisition would have no impact on federally listed species or sensitive species, however, acquiring these lands would allow the BLM to manage habitats for these animals according to public land health standards should they occur in the future.
NP	Special Status Plant Species	There are no federally listed threatened, endangered, or BLM sensitive plant species populations identified within the vicinity of the proposed land acquisition.
PI	Upland Vegetation	Upland vegetation on the proposed parcel consists of montane riparian forests, mixed shrublands and grass communities. With numerous forbs that occur in smaller percentages. See chapter 3.3 for detailed analysis.
NI	Wetlands and Riparian Zones	The proposed land acquisition would allow the BLM to manage wetlands and riparian zones that occur along the Yampa River on the parcel.
NI	Wildlife, Aquatic	The proposed land acquisition would allow the BLM to manage habitat for aquatic wildlife as it occurs on the acquired parcel.
NI	Wildlife, Terrestrial	The proposed land acquisition would allow the BLM to manage habitat for terrestrial wildlife as it occurs on the acquired parcel.
NP	Wild Horses	The Sarvis Creek Parcel is not within a herd management area.
Heritage Resources and the Human Environment		
NI	Cultural Resources	With this action, the BLM would become responsible for managing cultural/historic properties that may be on the property. This alternative, though an undertaking, has no effect on cultural/historic properties. Any future proposed undertakings would require cultural resource review as directed by Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. This level of analysis would not be required if the parcel remains private.
NI	Environmental Justice	According to Census 2013, the only minority population of note in the impact area is the Hispanic community of Routt County. Hispanic or Latino represented 7% of the population, considerably less the Colorado state figure for the same group, 21.0%. Blacks, American Indians, Asians and Pacific Islanders accounted for around 2% of the population, below the comparable state figure in all cases. The census counted 7.5% of the Routt County population as living in families with incomes below the poverty line, compared to 12.9% for the entire state. Both minority and low income populations are dispersed throughout the county therefore no minority or low

		income populations would suffer disproportionately high and adverse effects as a result of any of the alternatives.
NP	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) was completed on July 18, 2014 and no evidence hazardous or petroleum products; no toxic substances, fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, rodenticides, or fungicides; and no suspected asbestos-containing building materials or lead-based paints associated with the site ²
NI	Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	The proposed parcel is adjacent to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area in the Routt National Forest. Subject to WO-IM 2011-154 and in accordance with BLM policy, the proposed project did not meet inventory finding of the presence of lands with wilderness characteristics due to development of the parcel (i.e., cabin) and proximity to County Road 18.
NI	Native American Religious Concerns	Protective measures for culturally sensitive Native American resources are established through consultation and coordination with the appropriate Native American tribes. Pursuant to the NEPA, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), FLMPMA, American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA), and Executive Order 13007, BLM has engaged in consultation with Native American representatives for the RMP planning process. The proposed acquisition is in conformance with the RMP. If ownership is transferred to the federal government, the federal government would be responsible for working with any tribes to ensure any activities do not affect Native American Religious Concerns.
NI	Paleontological Resources	Under the Proposed Action, the Federal Government would manage any paleontological resources (that may be discovered) as outlined in the LSFO RMP and under the Omnibus Public Lands Act, Paleontological Resources preservation subtitle.
NI	Social and Economic Conditions	There would not be any change to local social or economic conditions.
NI	Visual Resources	The proposed project is located in a VRM Class III area where moderate change to the characteristic landscape would be allowed as long as the existing characteristics of the landscape are partially retained. Visual Resource Inventory is high based on Scenic Quality Rating of A and Sensitivity Level Rating of High. No impacts to visual resources would be anticipated.
Resource Uses		
NI	Access and Transportation	The proposed action is not likely to influence existing conditions.
NI	Fire Management	The parcel is located in fire management zone B-1 and would continue to be managed based on the appropriate management response outlined in the NW CO fire management implementation guide.
PI	Forest Management	See Chapter 3 for analysis.
NP	Livestock Operations	The project area is not within a BLM administered grazing allotment.

NP	Prime and Unique Farmlands	There are no Prime and Unique Farmlands in the project area.
NP	Realty Authorizations, Land Tenure	There are no realty authorizations within the project area.
PI	Recreation	Impacts are expected to be positive and are described in Chapter 3.
Special Designations		
NP	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	There are no ACECs in the vicinity of the proposed project area and, therefore, would not be affected by the proposed action(s).
NP	Wild and Scenic Rivers	There are no eligible rivers in the vicinity of the proposed project area and, therefore, would not be affected by the proposed action(s).
NI	Wilderness and Wilderness Study Areas	The proposed parcel is adjacent to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area in the Routt National Forest. However, the proposed action would not impact the wilderness area to a degree that detailed analysis would be required.

¹ NP = Not present in the area impacted by the Proposed Action or Alternatives. NI = Present, but not affected to a degree that detailed analysis is required. PI = Present with potential for impact analyzed in detail in the EA.

2 – The ESA found flooring material containing asbestos, however this material would be removed prior to acquisition.

Cumulative Effects Analysis Assumptions: Cumulative effects are defined in the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR 1508.7) as “...the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions.” Table 1 lists the past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the area that might be affected by the Proposed Action; for this project the area considered was the 45.18 acre parcel and the approximately 3.5 miles of riparian corridor between Stagecoach Dam and the private hay meadows of the Catamount sub-division.

Table 1. Past, Present, and Reasonably Foreseeable Actions

Action Description	STATUS		
	Past	Present	Future
Livestock Grazing	x	x	x
Recreation	x	x	x
Invasive Weed Inventory and Treatments	x	x	x
Wildfire and Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation			x
Access and Transportation	x	x	x

3.2 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

SOIL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: There are several soil types associated with the project area; soils that have slopes of less than 25%, which are deep well drained soils found on benches and mountain slopes; soils that have slopes greater than 25%, which are also deep and well drained found on mountain slopes; and riparian area that have slopes of 0-3%, which are generally deep and somewhat poorly drained, found on stream terraces and flood plains.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The impacts to soils would primarily be positive. The acquisition parcels' acreage would not be at risk of permanent vegetation loss through development. The acres would be incorporated into the management plans of the surrounding public lands, thereby increasing the habitat management base. It would also simplify the management of the public lands because of uniformity of management objectives, and reduced fragmentation caused by checkerboard ownership boundaries. This action would increase the public land base to be managed, which may increase costs slightly. Maintaining large blocks of habitat allows the BLM to better manage for healthy habitats by treating weeds and conducting grassland/shrubland inventories and restoration activities at a scale more cost effective and more beneficial to natural habitats in the area at large.

No Action: The current management trends would likely continue. Future management of the existing vegetation and habitat types would be at the landowners' discretion. In the unlikely event of residential development (because of a lack of road access) there is a probability of vegetation loss and increased spread of noxious weed. Inconsistent vegetation and fuels management on these private inholdings, would impact the management of the surrounding public lands.

3.3 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

UPLAND VEGETATION

Affected Environment: Vegetation consists of mixed montane riparian forests, mixed shrublands and grass communities. The forest vegetation includes aspen, Engelmann blue spruce, limber pine, lodgepole pine and sub-alpine fir which are found on the slopes of the property. The shrub vegetation includes snowberry, chokecherry, currant, serviceberry, redosier dogwood, thinleaf alder and narrowleaf cottonwood with fringed sagebrush and oak brush. The herbaceous



understory is a diverse mix of grass species which includes Sandberg bluegrass, prairie junegrass, big bluestem, smooth brome and basin wildrye. There are numerous forbs that occur in smaller percentages and include yarrow, wild onion, Oregon grape, sego lilly, kinikini and dandelion. These plant communities are very diverse and productive. Plants on

these sites have strong, healthy root systems that allow production to increase significantly with favorable moisture conditions. Abundant plant litter is available for soil building and moisture retention. These plant communities typically provide for soil stability and a functioning hydrologic cycle (Photo courtesy of Western Rivers Conservancy/David Dietrick).

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Acquiring the proposed parcel would result in consistent vegetation management with the surrounding landscape. Currently, the proposed parcel is not included within a BLM Grazing Allotment so no evaluations have been conducted on the proposed parcel. Adjacent parcels of public land are meeting upland health assessment standards and consistent management would likely result in similar assessments. These plant communities exhibit productive growth and ample plant vigor throughout the growing season. There is no monitoring or visual observations that indicate grazing or utilization is a resource concern given the proposed acquisition.

Cumulative Effects: The proposed acquisition contains riparian and upland vegetation in a confined river corridor. These areas would be managed to restore and enhance natural riparian vegetation and eliminate the non-native vegetation. To enhance these areas, the BLM would work cooperatively with other agencies responsible for the area's water quality and use.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The current management trends would likely continue. Future management of the existing vegetation would be at the landowners' discretion. Inconsistent vegetation management on this private inholding, would impact the management of the surrounding public lands regardless of ownership status and designation.

Cumulative Effects: All facets of the plant communities on the proposed parcel are affected by climate, wildlife, and direct disturbance through the presence of roads and other physical facilities both within and adjacent to the proposed parcel. Past agricultural practices along with recreation use have and would continue to affect the vegetation community within these areas. When added to the existing activities in and adjacent to the proposed parcel, approval of the proposed action would not cause undue damage to upland vegetation.

3.4 RESOURCE USES

ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: Access to the parcel from the north and the south is via Routt County Road (RCR) 18. According to the Sarvis Creek Area Plan (Routt County 1996), RCR18 has been designated by the Routt County Road Maintenance Plan as "Low Volume". Low Volume roads are defined as passable, with few improvements. Travel on this road may at times be difficult. Four-wheel drive vehicles are recommended for travel through this area. Cars and low riding vehicles may not be appropriate for traveling this road. This road favors alternative methods of transportation, and at times may be restricted to certain forms of travel. Routt County does not plow snow on this road. In the winter months, users are required to park in designated areas and use alternative forms of transportation. The Road and Bridge Department protects this road from unnecessary damage due to travel during inclement periods of the year by enacting seasonal

closures, during the spring runoff. Additionally, Routt County, through resolution, allows the Upper Yampa Conservancy District to close RCR18 from RCR14 to the dam, to accommodate Colorado Parks and Recreation's concerns for elk winter range lying north of RCR18. Specifically, the resolution states "It is expressly understood that any closure of said portion of RCR18 during the winter months in order to accommodate CPW's concerns for the elk winter range lying north of said road shall in no way indicate a vacation or abandonment by the County of said road. The County reserves the right to discontinue or limit any closure of the road during winter months at the discretion of the county and to cause installation of signage to attempt to regulate disruption of the elk. Initially the County will agree to close said portion of the RCR18 for three months during the winter season." The elk winter closure shall begin only after RCR18 through the canyon has snowed shut, and motor vehicle travel through the canyon is not possible. The seasonal spring closures shall begin when the snow melt has progressed to a point where vehicles may begin to attempt to drive through the canyon. The spring seasonal closure is from the cattleguard below the dam at Stagecoach Reservoir to Pleasant Valley.

The Sarvis Creek Area Plan goes on to say that the road will be managed in a manner consistent with the desire to keep the area primitive, but accessible, without encouraging additional vehicle traffic through the canyon. Low Volume management techniques will be favored over traditional practices. Importation of gravel and advanced drainage installations will be used sparingly and only as necessary. The Low Volume status will result in the road being maintained as passable to high clearance, four-wheel drive vehicles.

Parking

There is a small parking area adjacent to the cabin. There are no designated parking areas along RCR18 and the road is currently experiencing some parking issues. Approximately ¼ miles south of the parcel is a designated parking area maintained by Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: Because RCR18 is under management by Routt County, the BLM cannot control the condition of the road and must adhere to county imposed seasonal closures. The proposed acquisition may result in an increase in traffic as the recreating public uses the area. An increase in vehicles may result in more turnouts along the road, as the road is only wide enough for one vehicle. When two vehicles meet along the road, one must immediately find a wide enough spot and pull over, or be forced to back up until a wide spot is located. These types of actions may increase damage to the road and roadside vegetation.

Cumulative Effects: Reasonably foreseeable future actions include a fish habitat improvement project on BLM managed lands just downstream from the proposed acquisition. This project, along with the Proposed Action, could attract more recreationists who desire to fish this previously off-limits section of river. Further, Routt County has expressed a desire to close this section of road to through traffic and to provide parking facilities at each end.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The impacts under the No Action Alternative would be the same as described under the affected environment.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no cumulative effects under the No Action Alternative.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: Approximately 20 acres of the parcel is forested. Species present include lodgepole pine, sub-alpine fir, Engelmann spruce, and aspen. The forested areas are predominately on a steep westerly aspect with a small stand on the flat river plain west of the river.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposed action would add approximately 20 acres of forested land to the federal government land base and subsequently placed into USFS management.. No forest management activities are likely due to the steepness of most of the forested terrain and the parcel's proximity to the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area. Limited hazard tree removal in the flat forested area would be the only potential forest related activity.

Cumulative Effects: There are no known past, present or future forestry related activities that would have any measurable cumulative impacts to forest management.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects: No additional forest land would come under federal management; therefore there are no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects.

RECREATION

Affected Environment: The proposed acquisition includes 1,535 feet of the Upper Yampa River. This area is extremely popular with fly anglers, hunters, hikers and campers. The proposed acquisition also includes a cabin, which would be managed under a future business/management plan. The business/management plan for the cabin (which may include nightly rentals) would require additional NEPA analysis.

Environmental Consequences of the Proposed Action:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The proposed action would increase the amount of accessible public land within the upper Yampa River corridor thus allowing visitors interested in a variety of recreational experiences to engage in their chosen activity unhindered by scattered landownership patterns. Public recreation opportunities (such as camping, fishing, hiking, hunting and wildlife viewing) would be enhanced within the river corridor. The proposed action would also reduce management complications (such as unintentional trespass) common with scattered landownership patterns.

Cumulative Effects: In the foreseeable future, the BLM would develop a site-specific management plan to include local community and public input. The plan would contain multiple objectives, primarily geared towards protecting and enhancing the cultural, riparian, natural resources, and interpretive values. Recreational opportunities would be enhanced by consolidating public land ownership.

Environmental Consequences of the No Action Alternative:

Direct and Indirect Effects: The private inholdings would remain privately owned and the management complications common with scattered landownership patterns would continue. The parcel may be subject to potential future land development that could impair the open space and solitude of the Upper Yampa River corridor.

Cumulative Effects: There would be no cumulative effects under the No Action Alternative.

REFERENCES CITED: Sarvis Creek Area Plan, Routt County, Colorado. September 5, 1996.

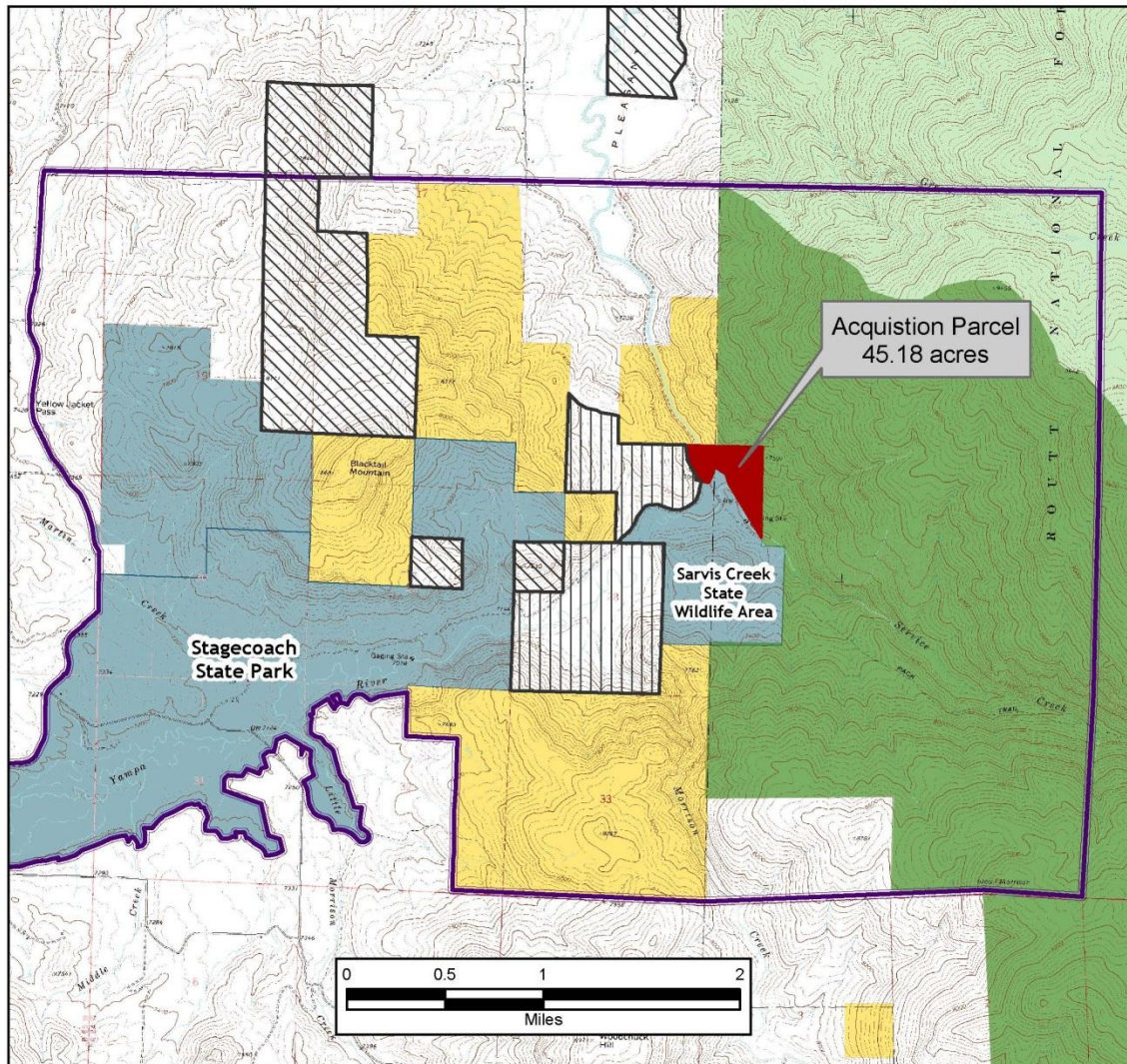
INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW:

Name	Title	Area of Responsibility	Date Signed
Kathy McKinstry	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Air Quality; Surface and Ground Water Quality; Floodplains, Hydrology, and Water Rights; Soils	08/29/14
Aimee Huff	Rangeland Management Specialist	Special Status Plant Species; Vegetation	09/02/14
Brian Naze	Archaeologist	Cultural Resources; Native American Religious Concerns; Paleontological Resources	09/08/14
Christina Rhyne	Rangeland Management Specialist	Invasive, Non-Native Species; Rangeland Management	09/05/14
Desa Ausmus	Wildlife Biologist	Migratory Birds; Special Status Animal Species; Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife; Wetlands and Riparian Zones	09/05/14
Shawn Wiser	Natural Resource Specialist	Hazardous or Solid Wastes	09/03/14
Gina Robison	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Wilderness; Visual Resources; Access and Transportation; Recreation, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern	08/29/14
Dale Beckerman	Natural Resource Specialist	Forest Management	09/02/14
Jennifer Maiolo	Mining Engineer	Geology and Minerals	09/02/14
Louise McMinn	Realty Specialist	Realty	09/05/14
Kathy McKinstry	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	Project Lead – Document Preparer NEPA Compliance	09/05/14

ATTACHMENTS:

Figure 1: Map of the Project

Sarvis Creek Project Area



Legend

- BLM Acquisition Parcel
- Routt County Sarvis Creek Planning Area
- USFS Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area

Conservation Easement

- Existing
- Proposed

Surface Management Status

- Bureau of Land Management
- Colorado Parks & Wildlife
- National Forest
- Private



No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual use or aggregation with other data. All boundaries are an approximate representation.

07/03/14

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625**

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0049EA**

BACKGROUND

The Federal Government, in partnership with Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) and the Yampa River Legacy Partnership, would acquire a 45.18 acre parcel, which includes approximately 1,535 feet of Yampa River frontage in Routt County, Colorado. The parcel adjoins the Sarvis Creek Wilderness Area, managed by the United States Forest Service on the east; the Sarvis Creek State Wildlife Area, managed by Colorado Parks and Wildlife on the south and BLM lands to the north. The land adjacent to the parcel on the west is still in private ownership, but there are on-going negotiations for this parcel to be placed in a conservation easement.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based upon a review of the EA and the supporting documents, I have determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action and will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity, as defined at 40 CFR 1508.27 and do not exceed those effects as described in the Little Snake Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan (October 2011). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required. This finding is based on the context and intensity of the project as described below.

Context

Potential effects resulting from the implementation of the proposed action have been analyzed within the context of the Upper Yampa Watershed. The proposed action would transfer approximately 45 acres of land from private to federal management. This encompasses less than .003% of the acreage within the 1.15 million acre Upper Yampa watershed [40 CFR 1508.27(a)].

Intensity

The following discussion is organized around the 10 Significance Criteria described at 40 CFR 1508.27. The following have been considered in evaluating intensity for this Proposed Action:

1. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(1)] - **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** The BLM interdisciplinary team of specialist reviewed the proposed acquisition of approximately 45 acres and determined that minimal to no impacts, beneficial or adverse, would occur. The resources considered include air quality, fire and fuels management, fisheries and aquatic habitat, invasive, non-native plant species, special status species and habitat, wildlife, soils, water quality, cultural

resources, recreation and access/transportation. The proposed action is unlikely to have significant adverse impacts on these resources for the following reasons:

2. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(2)] - **The degree to which the Proposed Action affects public health or safety:** The proposed action is administrative in nature and would have no effect on public health and safety.

3. [40CFR 1508.27(b)(3)] - **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas:** The proposed action would not affect historical or cultural resource, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas, because these resources are not located within the project area.

4. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(4)] - **Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial:** The proposed action is not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without highly controversial, highly uncertain, unique, or unknown risks

5. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(5)] - **Degree to which the possible effects on the quality of the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks:** The effects associated with the proposed action do not have uncertain, unique, or unknown risks, because the BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without these risks

6. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(6)] - **Degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration:** The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions, nor would it represent a decision in principle about a further consideration for the following reasons: 1/ The project is within the scope of proposed activities documented in the Little Snake RMP. 2/ The BLM has experience implementing similar actions in similar areas without setting a precedent for future actions or representing a decision about a further consideration.

7. 40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7) - **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts:** The small scope of the proposed action will not contribute to any significant impacts.

8. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(8)] - **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed on the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources:** The project would not affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would the project cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.

9. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(9)] – **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973:** The project would not have any effect on any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, botanical species or their habitat. As such, consultation is not required for this action.

10. [40 CFR 1508.27(b)(10)] – **Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment:** Neither the Proposed Action nor impacts associated with it violate any laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

SIGNATURE OF AUTHORIZED OFFICIAL: _____ Timothy J. Wilson, acting _____
Field Manager

DATE SIGNED: 09/16/14

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Little Snake Field Office
455 Emerson Street
Craig, CO 81625**

DECISION RECORD

PROJECT NAME: SARVIS CREEK ACQUISITION

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0049EA

DECISION AND RATIONALE

I have determined that approving this acquisition is in conformance with the approved land use plan. Analysis of the proposed action has concluded that there are no significant negative impacts, thus it is my decision to implement the proposed action.

COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS & CONFORMANCE WITH THE LAND USE PLAN

This decision is in compliance with The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as Amended (43 USC 1752), Section 205; The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of January 2, 1971 as amended (P.L. 91-646), (42 U.S.C. Sec 4601, et seq.); Annual Appropriations Acts; Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 as amended (P.L. 88-578), (16 U.S.C. Sec 460, et seq.); Federal Land Transaction Facilitation Act of July 25, 2000 (P.L. 106-248).(114 Stat. 613); April 16, 2010 Presidential Memorandum – America’s Great Outdoors.

It is also in conformance with the Little Snake Field Office Record of Decision/Approved Resource Management Plan (October 2011).

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The Proposed Action was analyzed in DOI-BLM-CO-N010-2014-0049-EA and it was found to have no significant impacts, thus an EIS is not required.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

A person who wishes to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals must do so under 43 CFR 4.411. The notice of appeal must be filed in the office of the officer who made the decision (not the Board), Timothy J. Wilson, 455 Emerson Street, Craig, CO 81625. A person served with the decision being appealed must transmit the notice of appeal in time for it to be received in the appropriate office no later than 30 days after the date of service of the decision.

The notice of appeal must give the serial number or other identification of the case and may include a statement of reasons for the appeal, and a statement of standing if required by § 4.412(b), and any arguments the appellant wishes to make. Form 1842-1 provides additional information regarding filing an appeal.

No extension of time will be granted for filing a notice of appeal. If a notice of appeal is filed after the grace period provided in §4.401(a), the notice of appeal will not be considered and the case will be closed by the officer from whose decision the appeal is taken. If the appeal is filed during the grace period provided in §4.401(a) and the delay in filing is not waived, as provided in that section, the notice of appeal will not be considered and the appeal will be dismissed by the Board.

The appellant shall serve a copy of the notice of appeal and any statements of reason, written arguments, or briefs under §4.413 on each adverse party named in the decision from which the appeal is taken and on the Office of the Solicitor, Rocky Mountain Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 755 Parfet Street, Suite 151, Lakewood, CO 80215. Service must be accompanied by personally serving a copy to the party or by sending the document by registered or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the address of record in the bureau, no later than 15 days after filing the document.

In addition, within thirty (30) days of receipt of this decision you have the right to file a petition for a stay together with your appeal in accordance with the regulations at 43 CFR 4.21. The petition must be served upon the same parties specified above.

Pursuant to 43 CFR 4.47I(c), a petition for stay, if filed, must show sufficient justification based on the following standards:

- (1) The relative harm to the parties if the stay is granted or denied;
- (2) The likelihood of the appellant's success on the merits;
- (3) The likelihood of immediate and irreparable harm if the stay is not granted; and,
- (4) Whether the public interest favors granting the stay.

43 CFR 4.471 (d) provides that the appellant requesting a stay bears the burden of proof to demonstrate that a stay should be granted.

At the conclusion of any document that a party must serve, the party or its representative must sign a written statement certifying that service has been or will be made in accordance with the applicable rules and specifying the date and manner of such service (43 CFR 4.422(c)(2)),

Timothy J. Wilson
Timothy J. Wilson
Acting, Field Manager
Little Snake Field Office

09/16/14
Date